



THE TENNESSEE WARBLER

Newsletter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society

August, 2002

Editor, Theresa Graham

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On behalf of the TOS members who attended the recent Annual Meeting in Dyersburg, I would like to thank West Tennessee Vice President Sue Ferguson and the rest of the local arrangement committee for pulling together a very successful meeting. Because the Annual Meeting rotates among the three grand divisions of Tennessee, the Memphis Chapter hosts the meeting every third year with the West TN VP normally in charge of the meeting. This year, the planning was unusually difficult because of the state parks situation and recent changes in reservation policies at Reelfoot area motels.

Many of the meeting highlights are described elsewhere in this newsletter. I'd like to mention a couple highlights from the Board of Directors meeting. Virginia Reynolds was nominated to be President-Elect, and Chris Sloan was nominated to be the next TOS Treasurer. Both of these nominees were formally elected during the annual membership meeting. Virginia will become President in May 2003, and Chris will become Treasurer following the resignation of the current Treasurer, David Trently. This will not occur until the Finance Committee has inspected and approved the TOS books, hopefully this summer.

Our next TOS-wide gathering will be the Fall Meeting and Symposium, to be held in Columbia on November 1-3. Further details of this meeting are available elsewhere in this newsletter. I hope to see all of you there. Until then, keep birding and reporting your observations. And if you were involved in point counts or Breeding Bird Survey routes, please submit your results as soon as possible.

Chuck Nicholson
TOS President



Fall Meeting
Columbia, Tennessee
November 1 - 3, 2002



The Mayfield-Gray Chapter will host the 2002 TOS Fall Meeting in Columbia, TN, November 1-3.

A block of rooms has been set aside at the Richland Inn (931-381-4500). The price of a room is \$54.36 total, including tax. Be sure to mention that you are with TOS. This will also be our meeting headquarters.

Registration will be held on Friday, November 1 from 7:00 till 9:00 p.m. in the hotel conference room. Refreshments will be provided. A \$3.00 registration fee will be due at that time.

Many details are still being worked out for the weekend, however field trips to area lakes and locations are being planned.

When more information becomes available, it will be posted on the TOS website: www.tnbirds.org

2002 ANNUAL MEETING HELD AT DYERSBURG

Dyersburg was the site of the 2002 TOS Annual Meeting hosted by the Memphis Chapter. About 100 persons attended all or parts of the meeting, including a number of non-members who came after reading articles about the meeting and interviews with Ken Leggett in the local newspaper. Dyersburg State Community College generously provided meeting space for the society at no charge. The facilities were excellent, and the college staff was cooperative in every way. The Vice-president of the college, Dr. Peter Brown, and his wife Judy attended as guests of the Society.

A short annual membership meeting followed the Saturday evening banquet. Ruth Luckado of the Highland Rim Chapter and Jim Ferguson of the Memphis Chapter were both recognized for their contributions to the Society and presented Distinguished Service Awards. The membership meeting was followed by an illustrated talk on shorebirds by Wayne Petersen of the Massachusetts Audubon Society. The full minutes of the meeting will be published in *The Migrant*.

Saturday and Sunday field trips to the great habitats found in northwest Tennessee and the Reelfoot Lake area were productive. Hike leaders for the weekend were Ken Leggett, Chris Sloan, Rob Peebles, and Dick Preston. Ninety-five observers reported 185 species of birds, including 32 species of Warblers. Most notable sightings were Western Kingbird, Common Moorhen, King Rail, Cape May Warbler and Olive-sided Flycatcher, Sandhill Crane, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and Clay-colored Sparrow.

NORTH AMERICAN MIGRATION COUNT RESULTS DUE

North American Migration Count results are now overdue. If anyone has any results from the May 11th count, please send them to me at once, as I'm getting ready to send them to the editor of *The Migrant*. You can e-mail them to me (dollyron@icx.net), or send them to me at 282 Hackworth Ln., Clinton, TN. 37716.

Thanks for your efforts.

Ron Hoff, TOS State Count Compiler

TOS PRESIDENT CHUCK NICHOLSON ADDRESSES WILDLIFE COMMISSION

State President Chuck Nicholson represented the Tennessee Ornithological Society at the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission meeting on April 25, 2002. President Nicholson made a symbolic check presentation to TWRA Director Gary Myers, publicly acknowledging the nearly \$49,000 given by the TOS and its members to the Foothills Land Conservancy to aide in TWRA's acquisition of the Yuchi Refuge and the additional \$7,500 presented to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Foundation for waterfowl and crane management at the Hiwassee Refuge. The contribution made by the TOS and its members was larger than any other single group involved in the acquisition project. The additional \$7,500 provided for habitat management was raised at a fundraiser hosted by the TOS in Chattanooga celebrating the arrival of the Whooping Cranes being reintroduced to the eastern United States to Tennessee.

The presentation provided a unique opportunity for TOS President Nicholson to address the governing body of the TWRA, underscore the continued support that Tennessee birders provide for wildlife programs, and outline issues of importance to TOS. Following is a transcript of President Nicholson's presentation speech to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission:

Although the Tennessee Ornithological Society has been a partner with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency for decades, many of you may not be familiar with our organization. So I would like to take a few moments to provide a little background information on TOS. The TOS is a volunteer-based society with no paid staff. We have about 900 members, ranging from backyard feeder watchers to professional ornithologists, and a network of eleven chapters across the state. We were founded in 1915 to promote the enjoyment, scientific study, and conservation of birds. We are the oldest conservation organization in Tennessee and one of the oldest in the southeastern United States.

The TOS is an active advocate for birds and bird conservation in Tennessee. Much of this advocacy is through hands-on involvement that totals thousands of volunteer service hours each years. Much of this service involves conducting a variety of bird counts and censuses across the state, and some of these counts have been run continuously since the 1920s. The TOS also coordinates the Department of Interior's Breeding Bird Survey in Tennessee; this survey is one of the longest running and most rigorous surveys for any large group of animals.

Much of this volunteer service is carried out in partnership with TWRA and much of it is on TWRA lands. One of these cooperative projects was the Bald Eagle restoration program in Tennessee, which utilized over 65 volunteers during its duration and resulted in the return of our national symbol to Tennessee as a nesting species. TOS members also volunteered for the Peregrine Falcon hacking program and the Osprey recovery program. Currently, TOS members continue to assist TWRA by participating in Bald Eagle counts during winter, Bald Eagle nesting counts in summer, and songbird monitoring on wildlife management areas during the spring and summer. TOS members have also researched and published many articles and reports on the birds of Tennessee, including *The Breeding Bird Atlas of Tennessee*. Other publications have been about birds on TWRA lands.

For many years the Tennessee Ornithological Society has demonstrated its commitment to Tennessee's wildlife. However, the society is sensitive to complaints from sportsmen that nonsportsmen do not adequately help "foot the bill" for conservation. While we do not agree with this claim, we do strongly agree with the need to better engage nonconsumptive users to contribute to conservation. A culture of contributing must be established within nonconsumptive user groups to develop a "user-pay" mentality similar to that already proclaimed by hunters and fishermen. We note that these contributions can be in many forms besides license fees.

Story Continued on Page 4

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I've already mentioned some of the service-oriented contributions TOS has made. We have also made many contributions that involved cold, hard cash. The TOS contributed more to the purchase of the Smith Bend/Yuchi Refuge than any other conservation group. We also held a fund-raiser last fall tied to the experimental migration of the endangered Whooping Crane through Tennessee. This event raised several thousand dollars, most of which we are donating to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Foundation to be used for crane and waterfowl management activities in the Hiwassee Island area.

Through these types of contributions, the TOS has set out to establish a precedent for other nongame-oriented groups throughout the country to play a more active role in conservation.

As interest in wildlife watching, particularly bird watching, and other outdoor recreation soars, the TOS believes that numerous opportunities are available to protect lands for a variety of user groups. The TOS also believes that success in these land protection efforts will only be realized through partnerships involving sportsmen and nonsportsmen. Furthermore, we think that increased dialogue, understanding, and cooperation will be the key to success in Tennessee.

The spirit of such a diverse partnership was realized in the acquisition of Smith's Bend. For this reason, the Tennessee Ornithological Society is proud to have led the way on this project and hopes that it has set a precedent for future land protection projects in Tennessee. The Tennessee Ornithological Society is also delighted to see that one of the largest public land acquisitions in the history of the TWRA (the ongoing acquisition of the International Paper lands in the Cumberland Mountains) is also one that can claim one of the most diverse partnerships in the agency's history. The TOS is happy to see the TWRA demonstrate the importance of nongame interests to the people of Tennessee and looks forward to future cooperation. For this reason, the TOS is happy to present these checks to the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, the first to be used towards the purchase of the Yuchi Refuge and the second to be used to help cover management costs of the refuge.



Chuck Nicholson presents TOS checks to TWRA Executive Director Gary Myers during Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission meeting April 25, 2002.

CHAPTER NEWS

JOHN SELLARS TOS Lebanon Chapter- We had a good Spring Count with several backyard counters and three parties that drove around. Regardless, we had a great time.

Throughout the past spring & early summer, we did do a few side trips as individuals- two went to Radnor Lake birding, four went to Defeated Creek/ Cordell Hull Lake area to bird one day (a male Summer Tanager was most obliging and we watched something we've never witnessed. A White-eyed Vireo was feeding & raising a young Cowbird- this is not so unusual, admittedly...but watching a cowbird attempting to reach up and snag tent caterpillars with its beak was quite intriguing yet disheartening for the poor adult all upset over our presence!) One party went to Mt. Rogers in VA and Florida, also. Of course, birding took place whenever possible!

We plan to have a few guest speakers this coming fall & early winter and would very much love to have any volunteers!

We also are working on an introductory class to birding for about three weeknights or so but particulars have yet to be determined.

Melissa Turrentine

CHAPTER NEWS

CHATTANOOGA CHAPTER - The North American Migration Count tallied 143 species in Hamilton County, a bit below our average total. Highlights included: Black Rail seen at the Standifer Gap Marsh by Jeff Basham. At the same site were 2 Least Bittern, 1 Virginia Rail, 2 Sora, Semipalmated Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper and 2 calling Willow Flycatchers. A Barn Owl was seen by Bonnie Johnson, Judy Newsome and Janice Chadwell on Snow Hill Rd. Dan Jacobson and John Henderson reported 2 Fish Crows at Chester Frost Park. A very good list of 30 warbler species were sighted, including a singing Golden-winged Warbler on Bakewell Mountain, and a singing Black-throated Blue at the Cravens House. A Gray-cheeked Thrush was also reported from there.

The Chattanooga Chapter has been very fortunate the last three months to have members from the Nashville area present programs at our monthly meetings. In April, Troy Ettel talked about the historic avifauna and habitat of Tennessee, based on records of the earliest naturalists. Richard Connors shared his Costa Rica birding and photography trip with us at the May meeting. The slides were spectacular. For June, Jan Shaw presented slides, as well as some video footage from her trip to Panama. Seeing and hearing some of the birds in action was fascinating.

Chattanooga Chapter Officers for 2002-2003: President, Bonnie Johnson; Programs/Vice President, David Aborn; Field Trips/Vice President, Clyde Blum; Secretary, Judy Newsome; Treasurer, Carol Fegarido; Statistician, Kevin Calhoon; and Historian, Ken Dubke.

Bonnie Johnson

GREENEVILLE CHAPTER - Migration came and went in fits and starts this spring, with members reporting few waves of birds at any point. However, at times the birding was spectacular, and several species infrequently seen in Greene County were observed. Highlights included Greater Scaup (6 on March 18), Virginia Rail (April 27), American Avocet (6 on April 13), Willet (14 on April 27), White-rumped Sandpiper (May 13), Long-billed Dowitcher (April 28), Philadelphia Vireo (May 4), Northern Waterthrush (April 24), Vesper Sparrow (6 on April 1), Bobolink (6 on April 27), and Brewer's Blackbird (March 10).

As nesting season got underway, various chapter members and others observed good numbers of Whip-poor-wills at two sites in the Cherokee National Forest and small numbers of Chuck-will's-widows at three low-elevation sites. In early June, four singing male Willow Flycatchers were observed in the western part of the county; although nesting was not confirmed, the evidence was exciting and suggested that this species might be a county summer resident.

Upcoming Greeneville Chapter events: shorebirding trip to Rankin Wildlife Management Area (Cocke County) on Saturday, August 31; county-wide fall bird count on Saturday, September 14. Interested parties may contact Don Miller (423-639-4100, raincrow@xtn.net) or Jim Holt (423-639-0525, jholt@xtn.net) for more information.

Don Miller

The **MAYFIELD-GRAY CHAPTER** had its annual picnic on June 4th. New officers were elected. They are as follows: President, Phyllis Coble; Vice-President, Dr. George Mayfield; Secretary/Treasurer, Jennifer Cardenas; and Directors, Dr. George Mayfield and Jennifer Cardenas. We would like to thank Tommy Edwards for his years of service as President, and Phyllis Coble for her years of service as secretary. We look forward to seeing all of you here in Columbia for the fall meeting in November.

Jennifer Cardenas

MEMPHIS CHAPTER - A total of 138 species were recorded for the Shelby County Spring Count. This included a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 6 Eurasian Collared Doves, a Vesper Sparrow, 4 Pine Siskins, and 26 warbler species.

Some early summer notable sightings: Painted Bunting at the Earth Complex and in Hardeman County, and a male seen at Shelby Farms since late May, Ruddy Duck at Shelby Farms through late June, a large number of Western Kingbirds at the Earth Complex, with possibly as many as three nesting pairs and over 500 Cliff Swallow nests along the Wolf River in north Memphis.

Bob Ilardi

CHAPTER NEWS

The **NASHVILLE CHAPTER** TOS held its Spring Count on May 11, along with the International Migratory Bird Day count. Total species were 156, a good number for us, and much better than last year. Some of the highlights included 1 Common Loon and 1 Laughing Gull at Old Hickory Lake, 1 Bald Eagle in Cheatham County, 1 Eurasian Collared Dove near the intersection of I 24 and 840, 1 Black-billed Cuckoo in Gallatin, 1 Willow Flycatcher at Shelby Bottoms, 1 Horned Lark near Percy Priest Lake, 3 Bank Swallows in Cheatham County, 1 Bewick's Wren and 1 Lark Sparrow in Rutherford County, 34 warbler species including 3 Black-throated Blues, 2 Dickcissels in Williamson County after many years of being absent, and 5 Grasshopper Sparrows.

This year's NTOS Conservation Fund monetary awards will be given to the Tennessee Conservation League's Nature Link Weekend, Cornell's Golden-winged Warbler Atlas Project in Tennessee, the Oak Ridge Reservation, the Tennessee Traveling Wild Bird Trunk, and Chattanooga's Crane Weekend.

A pair of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers are nesting again at the Smyrna Airport, just southeast of Nashville. And Dickcissels are back on Del Rio Pike in Williamson County, after a few years absence. Grasshopper Sparrows have had a successful nesting this year just off of Del Rio Pike, but will likely be gone next year due to a new subdivision. The Radnor Walks this spring were very productive with several good sightings of both Connecticut and Mourning Warblers.

Recent NTOS field trips have included the Big South Fork area, Dauphin Island, Alabama, Radnor Lake a couple of times, and Roan Mountain. Monthly programs have been varied and interesting with Ed and Patricia Warr's southern Africa, Melinda Welton's Golden-winged Warbler Atlas Project, Daniel Moss' Grassland Birds of Ft. Campbell, and Jan Shaw's Birds of Panama.

Jan Shaw

STEPHEN R. RUSSELL CHAPTER-BRISTOL - Officers for 2002-2003: President, Dave Worley; Vice-President, Larry McDaniel; Secretary, Mary Erwin; Treasurer, Janice Martin; Curator, Wallace Coffey; Statistician, Richard Lewis.

June 14-16, twenty-one of our members enjoyed a weekend at beautiful Rikemo Lodge in Scott County, VA. Owned by The Nature Conservancy, the lodge is a beautiful, large, former hunting lodge of hand-hewn logs. Located on 100 acres of land along the Clinch River it provided hours of relaxation for our birders. On Saturday the 15th, 17 of our members took a 7-mile canoe trip down the Clinch from Cleveland to Carterton. The Nature Conservancy furnished the canoes and a guide in addition to the Lodge. After the list of birds found was turned over to the Conservancy, they asked if we would be willing to make the trip an annual event.

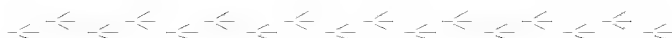
On June 29th, 38 people gathered at Steele Creek Park in Bristol for our annual picnic. Wallace Coffey cooked his "hot delights" and Fred & Janice Martin cooked the burgers and dogs. Everyone bought covered dishes, so we had a feast. Janice Martin co-coordinated the event and did a fabulous job. She was presented a special Bristol Bird Club picnic blanket, embroidered with a Bald Eagle and the name of the club.

Still to come this year are our annual banquet and our hawk watching trip to the fire tower in Mendota, VA. Larry McDaniel has promised us lots of hawks and eagles.

Thanks to my wonderful officers, this past year has been great for the club and I am looking forward to another one.

Here is hoping everyone has a great birding year.

Dave Worley



Whooping Cranes are returning to Tennessee

In preparation of the return of the Whooping Cranes in the fall of 2002, volunteers have joined forces to start "Whooping Cranes Over Tennessee". This is an event designed to promote the protection and create a source of joy and pride in the "ultralight aircraft led Whooping Cranes" when they migrate over Tennessee. An educational/outreach effort will be conducted at schools, civic organizations and various clubs along the migration route to inform students and other members of the public about this endangered bird and how its return will have a positive impact on our home state.



Event organizers are busy arranging a public "walk-a-thon," which will closely mimic the flight path of the young Whooping Cranes as they exit Kentucky and enter Tennessee just west of highway 127 and eventually leave our state passing east of Chattanooga before crossing into Georgia. The walk will be Olympic torch style with a "symbolic Whooping Crane" being passed from one walker to another at various checkpoints over the walking course. This fun and exciting event is scheduled to take place during the week of October 11 – 20 and will finish in Chattanooga with a festival in the park planned for walk participants and the public.

The goal of the fast approaching "Whooping Cranes Over Tennessee" event is to make Tennesseans aware of a history making Whooping Crane reintroduction program, which began in 2001 and will continue for the next 10-years. Funding is desperately needed for the success of this project. Proceeds raised will go to both the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Foundation (TWRF) and the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP). The Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership includes the International Crane Foundation and Operation Migration, Inc., both of whom are non-profit organizations as is the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Foundation and a tax-deductible receipt will be issued for donations.

The monies designated for the TWRF will be used for an educational outreach program, habitat enhancement, and a new education facility currently under construction at the Hiwassee Refuge in Meigs County, TN. A permanent pen was donated and constructed in 2001 at the Hiwassee Refuge so that during the migrations south the migration team, consisting of pilots, and the ground crew, as well as the cranes will stage at the refuge for up to a week before continuing south toward Florida. Monies destined for WCEP will help fund this and subsequent migration flights between Wisconsin and Florida and helps remove the Whooping crane from the endangered species list.

The Whooping Crane once inhabited much of North America, including Tennessee but was nearly wiped out due to unregulated hunting and human development. In the early 1940's only fifteen of these reclusive and stately birds remained. Today the only remaining wild migrating flock (all descendants of the surviving fifteen) numbers 174 individuals. This flock is vulnerable to disease and natural disasters and a second distinct migrating population must be established to ensure the survival of the species.

In the fall of 2001 a partnership of public and private organizations carried out the first of five planned aircraft assisted migrations. The Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP) consists of nine founding members; non-profit groups and government agencies that are combining forces to safeguard the rarest crane in the world.

After months of isolation rearing and flight training, on October 17th, three tiny ultralight aircraft lifted off from the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in central Wisconsin – with a small flock of juvenile Whooping Cranes following along. This strange blend of man and machine combined with these ancient birds, continued south; flying each day weather permitting, through Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia and halfway through Florida

before reaching the cranes' new wintering home at the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge. The journey south lasted 50-days and traveled 1228 miles.

The young cranes spent four months on the remote island at the refuge and on April 9, 2002, they were stirred by some primordial instinct and the five young cranes began the journey north – unassisted. For 9-days they flew each day and roosted each night; all the while tracked by a pair of biologists using radio telemetry equipment and satellite data. The birds traveled through Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois; never more than 80 miles from the route they had been taught during the flight south.

On April 18th, five Whooping Cranes returned home; to the wetlands of central Wisconsin where they first learned to fly with their mechanical surrogate. For the first time in more than a century, Whooping Cranes had migrated over the skies of eastern North America!

A second season of field training is currently underway in Wisconsin and this year crane supporters in Tennessee will see as many as seventeen juvenile whoopers following the ultralights of Operation Migration Inc., one of the non-profit founding members of WCEP and the developers of the ultralight technique. A new flock of endangered Whooping Cranes will be led south each fall for the next four years until a core group of migrating cranes is established. At this point the cranes will have reached breeding age of 4-5 years and we anticipate the adults will pass on this traditional migration route to their offspring.

Anyone interested in helping or learning more about this effort can contact a volunteer at (865) 675-6132; e-mail at whoopingcranesovertn@earthlink.net or sending a note to Whooping Cranes Over Tennessee, PO Box 788, Kingston, TN 37763-0788. A web site should be on line by mid-July.

Sandra & Jerry Ulrikson 176 Bayview Dr. Ten Mile, TN 37880 Tel: (865) 376-1819

REPORT FROM THE TOS CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH FUNDING COMMITTEE

The Conservation and Research Funding Committee made 4 awards totaling \$2990 between June 1, 2001 and May 31, 2002. Below is a short description of each award.

TOS Conservation and Research Grants

Avian Nest Monitoring in the Dominican Republic - Drs. Steve Latta and Chris Rimmer - \$905.

This grant provided binoculars needed to initiate a national monitoring program to understand habitat associations and population trends of both migrant and resident breeding birds. They will also be used for an intensive 3-year breeding biology study of some of the islands' rare endemic species.

Golden-winged Warbler Distribution and Habitat Requirements in Tennessee - Melinda Welton - \$685.

This grant will help cover the expenses of volunteers assisting in the TN Golden-winged Warbler Atlas Project which is identifying breeding locations and habitat associations of Golden-winged Warblers and range overlap with Blue-winged Warblers.

Windows to Birds - Friends of West Tennessee National Wildlife Refuges Friends - \$900.

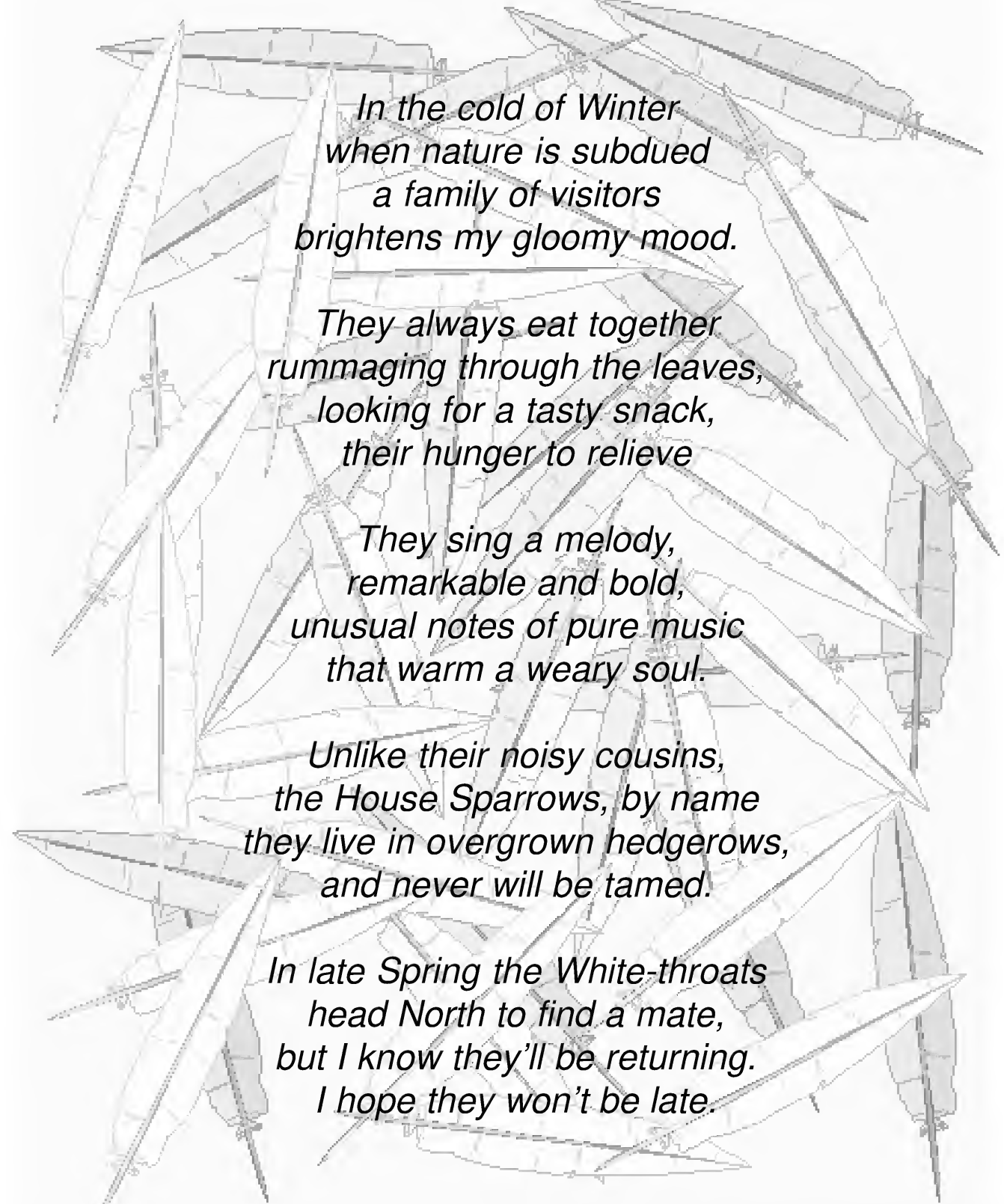
With the assistance of this award the Friends of W. Tenn. NWR will be erecting observation towers at Lake Isom, Chickasaw and Lower Hatchie National Wildlife Refuges.

Goodpasture Award

The 2001 Dr. Katherine Goodpasture Memorial Grant in Field Ornithology for \$500 was awarded to Portia Macmillan for her MAPS Station at Radnor Lake State Natural Area, Nashville, TN

Guidelines and applications for these grants are available at www.tnbirds.org

The White-throats



*In the cold of Winter
when nature is subdued
a family of visitors
brightens my gloomy mood.*

*They always eat together
rummaging through the leaves,
looking for a tasty snack,
their hunger to relieve*

*They sing a melody,
remarkable and bold,
unusual notes of pure music
that warm a weary soul.*

*Unlike their noisy cousins,
the House Sparrows, by name
they live in overgrown hedgerows,
and never will be tamed.*

*In late Spring the White-throats
head North to find a mate,
but I know they'll be returning.
I hope they won't be late.*

Gerry Papachristou, Memphis

Siskin & Egret's '4 Wings Up' Award
Given to TOS Website

The Tennessee Ornithological Society's website, www.tnbirds.org, was named one of the top 25 birding websites by birding.com. Their website is www.birding.com/BestWebSites.asp

Congratulations, Chuck! That's quite an honor.



OCTOBER 31ST DEADLINE

The deadline date for the December issue of *The Tennessee Warbler* is October 31st. Please submit all articles, announcements, reports and items of interest by this deadline date.

Submit Material To:

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